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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ AUG 0054  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE 3651  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE 1980  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 0636  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL IMMEDIATE 1058  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 002185

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: GOE SIGNS MLE; NAVY STRONG U.S. PARTNER IN DRUG  
FIGHT

Classified By: PolOff Jarahn Hillsman, Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (C) Summary: U.S. Coast Guard Rear Admiral Wayne Justice and Ecuadorian Rear Admiral Eduardo Navas signed a Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement (MLE) in Quito on August 30. The MLE standardizes a series of operational procedures for the interdiction and boarding of suspect Ecuadorian vessels, streamlining mil-to-mil cooperation to confront increasing maritime narcotics and migrant smuggling in Ecuadorian waters. This milestone caps two years of negotiations, and highlights the Ecuadorian Navy's commitment to work with U.S. authorities to combat narcotics and migrant smuggling at sea. The Ecuadorian Navy has aided in the seizure of over 40 tons of drugs in 15 months, increased patrolling assets at sea, and used limited resources to purchase new boats, demonstrating commitment to combat the threat of regional illicit activity. Former Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin's unconditional support of this effort likely helped bring it to fruition. End Summary.

MLE Signed

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¶2. (C) Coast Guard Director of Enforcement and Incident Management Directorate Rear Admiral Wayne Justice and Director of the Ecuadorian Coast Guard and Merchant Marine Rear Admiral Eduardo Navas signed a Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement (MLE) in Quito on August 30. Justice stressed the importance of maritime cooperation in the face of such an agile, well-funded narcotics threat. Ecuadorian Navy Commander Vice Admiral Hector Holguin agreed, expressing his Navy's commitment to work with the U.S. Navy to combat common threats at sea. Holguin said that he had supported the MLE initiative for over five years, and expressed hope that future agreements would conclude more rapidly. The Ambassador congratulated Holguin and Navas for their efforts to conclude the agreement and encouraged continued maritime cooperation and communication.

¶3. (C) The MLE standardizes operational procedures for boarding and inspecting vessels suspected of trafficking narcotics, psychotropic substances, and migrants by sea. The agreement creates a direct line of communication between the U.S. Coast Guard District 11 Command Center and the Ecuadorian Coast Guard (DIGMER), allowing for a fluid exchange of information on suspect vessels and expedited authorization to intercept and board. The MLE improves mil-to-mil communication on counter-narcotics efforts by removing several layers of cumbersome diplomatic channels on

both sides. The agreement also helps the resource strapped Ecuadorian Navy better fulfill obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

#### Counter-Drug Efforts Enhanced

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¶4. (C) Maritime cooperation on anti-narcotics and migrant smuggling issues has steadily increased over the last several years. In the last 15 months, the Ecuadorian Navy aided in the seizure of over 40 metric tons of cocaine aboard Ecuadorian flagged fishing vessels. In August alone, their units intercepted five migrant vessels. The Navy has also nearly completed construction of a pontoon pier in Manta which, when completed, will sustain its new patrol boats and give Manta a fulltime coastal patrol asset. The Navy also recently purchased 3 new 140' patrol boats from Spain for exclusive use by the Coast Guard operational command. The Ecuadorian Navy has done all these things with little prodding from the USG, and mostly with their own funds, under the command of Admiral Holguin.

#### Navy to Require Tracking Devices

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¶5. (SBU) Meanwhile, complementing Navy efforts, the Ecuadorian Coast Guard (DIGMER) recently purchased a geographic information system from GISMAP. With the new system DIGMER authorities hope to enhance visibility of Ecuadorian waters, while allowing more fluid communication between ship captains and DIGMER authorities. Arrival and departure details, owner and operator information, crew lists, ship specifications, and cargo information for all

Ecuadorian vessels would be entered into the system.

¶6. (U) DIGMER plans to require all Ecuadorian vessels weighing more than 10 tons to be equipped with satellite tracking devices. Ships meeting the weight requirements would need to purchase and install the tracking device by January 2007, Navas indicated. DIGMER plans to use the information to combat narcotrafficking, migrant smuggling, and other illegal activity in Ecuadorian waters. If and when the tracking devices are installed, the GISMAP system would be able to locate a given vessel at any time (if the device has not been turned off). The devices will cost between \$400-1,200 (per unit).

#### Navas Visits U.S.

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¶7. (C) Ecuadorian Coast Guard Rear Admiral Eduardo Navas, with MILGP support, traveled with the Embassy Coast Guard Attache to U.S. Coast Guard District 11 Headquarters in Alameda, California on August 21. USG and GOE Naval and Coast Guard officials discussed areas for greater cooperation, specifically focusing on joint operations within the Ecuadorian claimed 12-200 nautical mile territorial waters. Navas communicated the Ecuadorian Navy's willingness to work with U.S. maritime authorities, and requested greater assistance with training and professional exchanges. Meetings were positive, leaving significant room for additional discussions and greater cooperation.

#### Comment

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¶8. (SBU) The GOE deserves credit for its anti-narcotics fight, especially the Navy. Given the record of accomplishment and enhanced cooperation under the new agreement, we should seek new opportunities to support Navy counter-drug and migrant rescue efforts.

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